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Carpenters work in almost every type of construction. The jobs they do depend on the type of construction, the type of company, and the particular skills of the Carpenter. Working for a small home builder, a Carpenter might be involved in every part of a project, such as putting up the framework, walls, and roofs, and installing doors, windows, flooring, cabinets, paneling, and molding. In a larger operation, where there is more opportunity for specialized work, a Carpenter might do only one thing, such as roof framing or installing doors and windows. Carpenters working for a special trade contractor might specialize in one or two areas, such as the installation of hardwood flooring. In other types of construction, Carpenter jobs can be as different as constructing wooden forms for pouring concrete; building wooden bridges, piers, and trestles; and installing tunnel bracing.

Most Carpenter's work involves certain basic steps: They read plans, identify and find the materials they need, determine the sizes of the parts required, and measure and mark the materials for cutting. Working with hand tools and power equipment, Carpenters cut and shape the material and assemble or then install it following the plans.

**Tasks**

- ▶ Read blueprints and plans.
- ▶ Identify and find the materials they need.
- ▶ Determine the size of the lumber, and cut timbers to length.
- ▶ Measure and mark lumber.
- ▶ Measure and mark cutting lines on materials, using ruler, pencil, chalk, and marking gauge.
- ▶ Follow established safety rules and regulations and maintain a safe and clean environment.
- ▶ Verify trueness of structure, using plumb bob and level.
- ▶ Shape or cut materials to specified measurements, using hand tools, machines, or power saw.
- ▶ Study specifications in blueprints, sketches or building plans to prepare project layout and determine dimensions and materials required.
- ▶ Assemble and fasten materials to make framework or props, using hand tools and wood screws, nails, dowel pins, or glue.
- ▶ Build or repair cabinets, doors, frameworks, floors, and other wooden fixtures used in buildings, using woodworking machines, carpenter's hand tools, and power tools.

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- ▶ Erect scaffolding and ladders for assembling structures above ground level.
- ▶ Remove damaged or defective parts or sections of structures and repair or replace, using hand tools.
- ▶ Install structures and fixtures, such as windows, frames, floorings, and trim, or hardware, using carpenter's hand and power tools.

Detailed descriptions of this occupation may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) at [online.onetcenter.org](http://online.onetcenter.org).

### Important Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

- ▶ Mathematics — Using mathematics to solve problems.
- ▶ Time Management — Managing one's own time and the time of others.
- ▶ Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- ▶ Critical Thinking — Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
- ▶ Judgment and Decision Making — Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
- ▶ Management of Material Resources — Obtaining and seeing to the appropriate use of equipment, facilities, and materials needed to do certain work.
- ▶ Quality Control Analysis — Conducting tests and inspections of products, services, or processes to evaluate quality or performance.
- ▶ Building and Construction — Knowledge of materials, methods, and the tools involved in the construction or repair of houses, buildings, or other structures such as highways and roads.
- ▶ Arm-Hand Steadiness — The ability to keep your hand and arm steady while moving your arm or while holding your arm and hand in one position.
- ▶ Multilimb Coordination — The ability to coordinate two or more limbs (for example, two arms, two legs, or one leg and one arm) while sitting, standing, or lying down. It does not involve performing the activities while the whole body is in motion.
- ▶ Trunk Strength — The ability to use your abdominal and lower back muscles to support part of the body repeatedly or continuously over time without 'giving out' or fatiguing.
- ▶ Near Vision — The ability to see details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).

### Work Environment

Carpenters usually work as part of a crew. The work can be indoors or outdoors, at floor level, or on ladders or scaffolding, often in dusty, noisy places. Carpenter training stresses working safely and wearing protective equipment and clothing because Carpenters can be injured by falling objects, sharp tools, and power equipment, or from falling from high places. Carpenters provide their own hand tools and work clothing. The employer provides ladders, scaffolding, and any heavy equipment needed on the job. Jobs vary in length, from one-day house repairs to industrial projects that last years. In the winter when it's cold and rainy there aren't as many jobs for Carpenters so they may take on small indoor jobs.

Most Carpenters work an eight-hour day, Monday through Friday but there can be a lot of overtime. In larger areas, most journey-level workers and apprentices belong to unions but smaller communities have a lot of nonunion workers.

## California's Job Outlook and Wages

The California Outlook and Wage table below represents the occupation across all industries.

Standard Occupational Classification	Estimated Number of Workers 2004	Estimated Number of Workers 2014	Average Annual Openings	2006 Wage Range (per hour)
<b>Carpenters</b>				
47-2031	195,500	236,800	7,310	\$16.74 to \$27.89

*Wages do not reflect self-employment.*

*Average annual openings include new jobs plus net replacements.*

*Source: [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov), Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.*

## Trends

Employment prospects for Carpenters should be good through 2014, as the occupation will be expanding faster than employment as a whole for California. The significant turnover rate will mean that experienced carpenters should be in demand and lower-skilled workers should find job opportunities. That said, there can be periods of greater and lesser demand for carpenters. The most obvious reason for uneven demand is the seasonal nature of the work, particularly during the winter when inclement weather can bring jobs to a standstill.

Also, technological improvements in the building industry will work to reduce the need for skilled Carpenters. For example, the increasing use of premanufactured components such as wall panels, stairs, and roof trusses will help keep construction costs under control. Sometimes an entire home can be made in a factory and delivered and assembled on-site. Tools have also made real improvements with the advent of laser leveling tools, battery-powered equipment, construction calculators, and even computers that can generate a list of required materials from digital blueprints.

## Training/Requirements/Apprenticeships

Carpenters usually follow one of the following training paths:

- ▶ Formal apprenticeship
- ▶ Community college programs or certificates
- ▶ Vocational school
- ▶ Extensive on-the-job training

Many Carpenters learn the trade through informal on-the-job training. Starting out as a helper, these workers can gain skills by observing and assisting journey-level workers on the construction site. Sometimes, beginning carpenters can gain skills through vocational education classes or in classes given by employers. They can also enter a formal apprenticeship program sponsored by employers and unions, though these programs may offer a limited number of openings each year.

The training offered can vary depending upon the size of the employer. A small builder might not have time to train a new Carpenter in every aspect of the job, preferring to teach a new skill as it is required. A larger employer may offer on- or off-site training in a variety of carpentry skills. A greater command of a variety of different carpentry skills can make it easier to find a job.

## Recommended High School Course Work

Most employers prefer applicants who have at least a high school diploma or equivalent. High school preparation should include courses in shop, basic mathematics, and English.

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### Where Do I Find the Job?

Apply at the job site or the union hall. Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Word of mouth, or contacting a former employer to see if work is available is also a good way to see if jobs are opening up.

Use the *Search for Employers by Industry* feature on the *Career Center* page at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov) to locate employers in your area. Search using keywords from the following construction industry names to get a list of private firms and their addresses:

- ▶ Commercial Building
- ▶ Employment Placement Agencies
- ▶ Industrial Building
- ▶ New Multifamily Housing
- ▶ New Single-Family Housing
- ▶ Professional Employer Organizations
- ▶ Residential Remodelers
- ▶ Temporary Help Services

For local listings of contractors, search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- ▶ Building Contractors, Commercial/Industrial
- ▶ Building Contractors, General
- ▶ Framing Contractors
- ▶ Home Improvements
- ▶ Housing Authorities
- ▶ Local Governments

### Where Can The Job Lead?

Increasing skill makes a Carpenter more valuable to the employer, and greater responsibility may be offered to the employee. In a larger firm, positions as a construction supervisor or estimator may be available. Another career path might be to become a self-employed carpenter, perhaps supervising a small crew of carpenters. Good business sense and an ability to accurately estimate construction material and labor costs is very important if the Carpenter desires to run his or her own business.

Some carpenters become independent contractors. To advance, these workers should be able to identify and estimate the quantity of materials needed to properly complete a job. In addition, they must be able to accurately estimate how long a job should take to complete and what it will cost.

### Other Sources of Information

Associated Builders and Contractors  
[www.abc.org](http://www.abc.org)

Associated General Contractors of America, Inc.  
[www.agc.org](http://www.agc.org)

Home Builders Institute  
[www.hbi.org](http://www.hbi.org)

National Association of Home Builders  
[www.nahb.org](http://www.nahb.org)

United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America  
[www.carpenters.org](http://www.carpenters.org)